DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 206 027 CS 503 565

AUTHOR White, Jacqueline; McCaleb, Joseph
TITLE Instructional Communication: Some Concerns and Suggestions.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (Pittsburgh, PA, April 24-26, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Communication; Communication Research; *Course Content; *Educational Trends; Higher Education; *Speech Communication; Speech Curriculum; *Speech Instruction; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Effectiveness
IDENTIFIERS *Speech Communication Association

ABSTRACT

Two trends indicate the importance of competent communication skills in teacher preparation. The first is the professional commitment of the Speech Communication Association (SCA) to speech communication education. At various conferences, the SCA has made recommendations for speech communication training for teachers at all levels and for research identifying the speech competencies needed by all teachers. The second trend is the increase in the number of instructional communication courses offered to prospective teachers. One survey reported that 27% of accredited teacher education institutions offered a basic speech communication course specifically for teacher trainees, with 19 of those 122 schools requiring preservice teachers to complete such a course. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that improved teacher communication skills and competencies result in more effective teaching. Efforts to substantiate this claim through research are hampered by the lack of a common referent for the term "instructional communication." One way to define instructional communication would be to specify the course content. Current courses in instructional communication are usually comprised of instruction in 11 skills and seven areas of knowledge, including listening or reacting to students, using a wide range of methods for expressing approval or disapproval, and understanding socioeconomic, cultural, and sexual variables affecting classroom communication. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED206027

INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION:

SOME CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS

Submitted to the Instructional Practices Division of

ECA for the Seventy-second Annual Convention.

(O) (617) 437-2244
(H) (617) 657-5155

Dr. Jacqueline White
Dept. of Communication
147 Meserve Hall
Northeastern University
Boston, Mass, 02115

(O) (301) 454-2541
(H) (301) 927-2782

Dr. Joseph McCaleb
Dept. of Communication Arts
and Theatre
Tawes Fine Arts Bldg.
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jacqueline White
Joseph McCaleb

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS203565

INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION:

SOME CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Status Quo of Instructional Communication

"The education environment is a giant; multifaceted communication event composed of a variety of communication encounters." [1] The quality of the communication between teacher and students, teacher and administrators, teachers and parents, and among teachers themselves has an effect on the quality of education.

In 1978, Elizabeth M. Lynn in her book, Improving Classroom Communication: Speech Communication Instruction for Teachers presented a sound rationale for the existance of courses in classroom communication as follows:

1. that prospective and practicing classroom teachers have special needs for instruction in the skills of classroom communication;
2. that such skills and awareness are not innate, but must and can be learned through appropriate instruction and practice;
3. that the scope and diversity of a teacher's communication needs cannot be met solely through traditional education courses (such as "Foundations of Education" or "Introduction to Teaching") nor through traditional speech communication courses (such as "Public Speaking" or "Oral Interpretation");

---

[1] Jody L. Nyquist and James L. Booth, "Instructional Communication: A Basic Course for Teachers," Communication Education, XXVI (January, 1977, p. 13.

4. that courses need to be tailored to address teachers' special communication needs;

5. that the study of speech communication processes has a necessary relationship to understanding and improving teacher-student and student-student interactions in the classroom.[2]

While educators of teachers had long recognized the importance of effective teacher communication, classroom communication competency of teachers had until recently received only scattered attention in teacher training programs. "In brief, a significantly large population of practicing classroom teachers has had little or no training in the specific communication theory and skills needed for classroom use."[3] This was largely due to "....lack of class time, insufficient background of instructors, and education course priorities ...."[4]

Today, competent teacher communication is considered an integral part of teacher preparation. In a paper addressing the future directions of speech communication education, Nyquist and Booth observed that,

> In recent years, American education has been severely criticized. The target of many contemporary critics has been the state of communication between teachers and students, teachers and administrators, teachers and parents and among instructors themselves.

---

[2] Elizabeth M. Lynn, Improving Classroom Communication: Speech Communication Instruction for Teachers, (ERIC: 1976), p. ix-x.

[3] Elizabeth M. Lynn, "In-Service Teacher Education in Classroom Communication," Communication Education, XXVI, No. 1, (1977), p. 2

[4] Elizabeth M. Lynn, Improving Classroom Communication: Speech Communication Instruction for Teachers, (ERIC: 1976), p. 2

> Concern for quality communication in instructional environments and the conviction that communication is central to the teaching-learning process has not been provincial; testimony as to its importance is voluminous.[5]

Evidence of the importance placed on effective classroom communication behaviors in the teacher-learning process is evidenced by two trends: (1) the professional commitment of the Speech Communication Association to speech communication education, and (2) the marked increase in the number of courses in instructional communication.

Professional Commitment to Instructional Communication

Speech communication educators have turned their attention to this problem primarily through the Speech Communication Association and research efforts. A recommendation of the 1972 Airlie Conference was the production of an instructional development package for "...speech communication training for all teachers at all levels of education, directed toward insuring speech competency as a requirement of teachers at all levels."[6] This sentiment was echoed at the SCA Memphis Conference for Teacher Educators. Conference participants recommended to the Speech Communication Association Educational Policies Board and Research Board,

> ...the encouragement of research on all components of the teacher education process as well as on the interrelationships among these components, and the establishment of procedures for identifying the speech communication competencies needed by all teachers.[7]

---

[5] Jody L. Nyquist and James L. Booth, "Speech Communication Education: A Broadened Perspective," (paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, San Francisco, Calif., Dec. 1976), p. 2-3.

[6] Lynn, op. cit. p. 17

[7] Ibid., p. 18

During 1975, the SCA and the American Theatre Association jointly recommended guidelines for the education of teachers of speech communication, theatre, and non-speech subjects. These guidelines were published as competency models for preparation and certification of elementary and secondary school teachers in 1978.

All of these advances have been coupled with:

> The creation of the Instructional Development Division within the Speech Communication Association; the appointment of an Associate Executive Secretary for Education in SCA; the newly formed States Advisory Council sponsored by SCA; and state, regional, and national conventions and special conferences are additional indications of the emerging stature of the area of Speech Communication Education.[8]

Interest in instructional communication is also strong within the International Communication Association. Currently, ten percent of the membership of the International Communication Association belongs to its Instructional Communication Division. This interest was,

> ....spurred by the 1972 International Communication Association Convention in Communication and Learning, developed by the late Malcolm MacLean, and by the formation of the Instructional Communication Division of ICA during the same year.[9]

Increase in Instructional Communication Courses

During this same time span, research in speech communication as well as fields of education, psychology, social psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics,

> ...has shed new light and focused widespread attention upon an assortment of factors which appear to influence classroon interaction and possibly students' learning. This research knowledge, coupled with the growing recognition of teachers' communication needs, has led to a rapid growth of education courses dealing specifically with classroom communication.[10]

---

8 Nyquist, op. cit. p. 3-4

9 Michael D. Scott and Lawrence R. Wheeless, "Instructional Communication Theory and Research: An Overview," Communication Yearbook One, (N.J.: International Communication Association, 1977), p. 495

10 Lynn, op. cit., p. 58

Specifically, the Lynn survey reported that for undergraduates, twenty-seven percent of the National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education accredited institutions offered a basic speech communication course specifically designed for teacher trainees. Of those one hundred and twenty-two schools, nineteen schools required the pre-service teachers to complete such a course. For graduate students, ninety-two graduate level courses in classroom communication were reported by these NCATE institutions offering graduate education degrees. Lynn concluded that, in general, the results of her survey indicated that classroom communication courses are increasing in spite of economic constraints affecting the field of education.

The rationale for instructional communication courses as spelled out by Lynn is sound. Classroom communication courses taught by education or speech communication faculty are rapidly increasing. There is tacit agreement among speech and non-speech educators that, "Prospective and practicing instructors in other disciplines and at all levels in education, government, business and industry need courses in classroom communication theory and skills."[11] Unfortunately, there is also cause for concern.

Concerns about Instructional Communication

While speech communication educators assert that teacher communication skills and competencies result in more effective teaching, the claim is unsubstantiated. At best, this is a precarious situation in an age of accountability demands in education.

---

[11] Nyquist, op. cit., P. 8

> Obviously, taxpayers, lawmakers, and even some educators are demanding evidence of teaching effectiveness. Professionals in speech communication should not assume that teacher educators or others will continue to accept an unsubstantiated premise that good teachers are good communicators. [12]

Specifically, there is an immediate need to demonstrate through research that the instructional communication skill of teachers does increase student achievement. It is this correlation that will potentially answer accountability demands.

But any research effort in this direction is thwarted and retarded by the lack of a common referent for the term "instructional communication." Current definitions are vague and general. For example, Nyquist and Booth suggest that instructional communication is "... a particular kind of communication with special purposes and distinguishing characteristics."[13] On the other hand, Bassett and Smythe claim that is is artificial "...to talk of classroom communication as if it were a distinct form of communication." [14] Lynn defined instructional communication as encompassing the verbal and nonverbal interaction between teacher and students and between or among students.[15] While a definition of instructional communication is a step in the needed direction, these current definitions fall seriously short of operational definitions. Researchers attempting to proceed on the basis of these global definitions will be frustrated by lack of direction, duplication of effort, and waste of effort.

---

[12] Joseph L. McCaleb and Jacqueline White, "Clarity: A Primary Component of Instructional Communication," (paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Nov. 1978), p. 1

[13] Jody L. Nyquist and James L. Booth, "Instructional Communication: A Basic Course for Teachers," Communication Education, XXVI, (Jan. 1977), p. 14.

[14] Ronald E. Bassett and Mary-Jeanette Smythe, Communication and Instruction, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), p. 5

[15] Lynn, op. cit. p. 2.

Two questions must be answered by speech communication educators: (1) What should be the content of courses in instructional communication? and (2) Does instructional communication increase teaching effectiveness?

Instructional Communication Course Content

One way to define instructional communication would be to specify the course content. For example, if communication theory is taught as part of an education course, would that constitute instructional communication? Similarly, if a student demonstrated the ability to apply communication theory principles to the classroom context does he or she understand the principles of instructional communication?

Lynn reported that the following eleven skills and seven knowledge areas currently comprise the course content of courses in instructional communication.

> Teacher skills in: (1) explaining, giving information, lecturing, (2) questioning, (3) listening and/or reacting to students, (4) stimulating and developing the oral skills of students, (5) improving communication between student and classmate, (6) resolving conflicts, (7) communicating in an "open" classroom setting, (8) using a wider range of methods for expressing approval and disapproval, (9) utilizing interaction-analysis tools, (10) recognizing speech problems in the classroom for referral to appropriate corrective agencies, (11) controlling more effectively the communicative climate in the classroom;
>
> Teachers' understanding of: (1) the development of oral language in children, (2) socioeconomic, cultural/subcultural, and sexual variables affecting speech communication in a classroom, (3) various nonverbal factors which influence classroom communication, (4) factors affecting the teacher's own communication behaviors (dogmatism, stereotyping, etc,) (5) the interdependence of speech and personality, (6) interpersonal communication and practical application of such theory in the classroom, (7) speech principles and practices with practical application to the classroom situation. [16]

[16] Ibid. p. 34

Certainly skills #1, 2, 3, 8, and 9 could be taught in a basic education course. Skills #6 and 10 and understanding #1 and 5 could be taught in a general speech course. Only skills #4, 5, 7, and 11 and understanding #2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 could not be unquestionably obtained by coupling a three credit education course with a three credit speech course. But even these skills and understandings present problems in attempting to define the legitimate domain of content for courses in instructional communication.

First, they are stated in general terms and therefore are subject to a myriad of interpretations. Regarding such vaguely stated course content, Merwin cautioned that, "...it is highly unlikely that two trainers would indepedently structure the same assessment procedures or that two observers would attend to the same aspects of performance." [17]

Secondly, they invite a variety of approaches to teaching communication in the classroom context without specifying how that context differs from other communication contexts.

> As could be expected from an apparently mercurial concept, the literature includes textbooks which overlay the terminology of the basic speech course upon the educational context, others which approach teaching as a rhetorical event, and many which emphasize the affective climate of the classroom. Indeed from a broad perspective it can be argued that almost all of teaching is communication. Although the all-encompassing viewpoint may be advantageous to the speech communicator in presenting general arguements for courses in classroom communication, it presents a mire for his/her efforts in researching and finding specific support.[18]

---

[17] J. Merwin, "Performance-based Teacher Education: Some Measurement and Decision-making Considerations," PBTE Series No. 12 (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1973), p. 1.

[18] McCaleb, loc. cit.

Thirdly, would a three credit course in instructional communication focusing on these skills and understandings necessarily yield more effective teachers? Only when such skills and understandings are operationally defined and then empirically linked with student achievements will speech communication educators be able to answer accountability demands. Unfortunately, it is this type of research that the field of speech communication education is lacking.

> ...one has to be surprised at the paucity of original research investigations designed to provide empirical data with implications for objectives, methods or evaluation. Instructional development, as reflected by articles published in 1977, seems to be an area people write about, but do not conduct research in. [19]

Implications for Instructional Communication from Process-Product Research in Education

While there has been relatively little process-product research conducted in the field of speech communication education, over ten thousand such studies have been conducted in the field of education. This research dating back to 1940 was predicated upon the belief that

> ...the heart of the performance and competency-based approaches to teacher education, teacher evaluation, and teacher accountability has to be the empirically established relationship between teacher behavior as an independent variable and student cognitive and affective outcomes as dependent variables. [20]

---

[19] Ronald E. Bassett, "Research in Instructional Development in 1977," Issue #28 (Falls Church, Va.: Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, 1979), p. 15.

[20] David C. Berliner, "Impediment to the Study of Teacher Effectiveness," Journal of Teacher Education, XXVII, No. 1 (Spring, 1976), p. 5

In a comprehensive review of educational literature, Rosenshine and Furst concluded in 1973 that, "Nine variables appear to have yielded the most significant and/or consistent results across the 50-odd studies in which naturally occurring behavior was related to measures of student growth...[21] The nine variables (variously defined) were: clarity, enthusiasm, businesslike attitudes, criticism, teacher indirectness, opportunity to learn, structuring, and multiple levels of questions or cognitive discourse.

McCaleb and White recently suggested two reasons why the Rosenshine and Furst list of variables should be studied seriously by speech communication educators interested in correlating low inference instructional communication variables with student achievement.

> First, the process-product approach they used in selecting research studies to review seems especially appropriate for research which intends to relate instructional communication, which typically is viewed as a process, and teaching effectiveness, which many contend is best evaluated with reference to product measures.[22]

Secondly, the Rosenshine and Furst study is widely recognized and respected within the field of education and in communication education.[23]

They further suggested that the variable(s) selected for instructional communication research should: (1) be clearly within the parameters both of instruction and communication, (2) be evident in most content fields and in most methods of teaching, (3) apply especially to the beginning teacher, and (4) be observable and measurable within the constraints of situational testing.[24]

---

[21] Barak Rosenshine and Norma Furst, "The Use of Direct Observation to Study Teaching," in Second Handbook of Research on Teaching, Robert M. W. Travers (ed.), Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973, p. 155-56.

[22] McCaleb, op. cit. p. 2.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

Speech communication educators need to isolate low inference instructional communication variables. Investigations could then be encouraged that studied the correlation between these variables (process measures) and student achievement (product measure).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bassett, Ronald E. "Research in Instructional Development in 1977," Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, Issue #28 P. 10-16

Bassett, Ronald E., and Mary-Jeanette Smythe, Communication and Instruction. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979.

Berliner, David C. "Impediments to the Study of Teacher Effectiveness," Journal of Teacher Education, XXVII, No. 1 (Spring, 1976), P. 5-13.

Lynn, Elizabeth M. Improving Classroom Communication: Speech Communication: Speech Communication Instruction for Teachers. ERIC: Speech Communication Association, 1976.

Lynn, Elizabeth M. "In-Service Teacher Education in Classroom Communication," Communication Education, XXVI, No. 1 (Jan. 1977), P. 1-12.

McCaleb, Joseph L., and Jacqueline White. "Clarity: A Primary Component of Instructional Communication," Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Speech Communication Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 1978.

Merwin, J. "Performance-based Teacher Education: Some Measurement and Decision-making Considerations," PBTE Series No. 12. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1973.

Nyquist, Jody L. and James L. Booth. "Speech Communication Education: A Broadened Perspective," Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention: San Francisco, Calif., Dec. 1976.

Nyquist, Jody L. and James L. Booth. "Instructional Communication: A Basic Course for Teachers," Communication Education, XXVI (January 1977), P. 13-26.

Rosenshine, Barak and Norma Furst, "The Use of Direct Observation to Study Teaching," in Second Handbook of Research on Teaching. Edited by Robert Travers, Chicago: Mc Nally College Publishing Co., 1973.

Scott, Michael D. and Lawrence R. Wheeless. "Instructional Communication Theory and Research: An Overview," Communication Yearbook One. Edited by Brent D. Ruben, New Jersey: International Communication Association, 1977.